

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 210100Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4340

INFO AMCONSUL HERMOSILLO

ALL OTHER CONSULATES IN MEXICO (POUCH)

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ARA/MEX PLEASE PASS TO CRIGLER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MX, SOCI

SUBJECT: GOM HOLDS CAMPESINO RALLY

REF: MEXICO 4692

1. IN RESPONSE TO WORRISOME PATTERN OF CAMPESINO LAND INVASIONS (SEE REF), GOM APRIL 19 HELD HUGE CAMPESINO RALLY IN CIUDAD OBREGON, SONORA, GEOGRAPHICAL CENTER OF LAND INVASION PROBLEM. PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA WAS KEY SPEAKER TO 40,000 CAMPESINOS; ALL IMPORTANT POLITICAL FIGURES EXCEPT PRI PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO ATTENDED.

2. RALLY WAS PRECEDED BY SPECULATION THAT GOM MIGHT ACT TO MAKE RETROACTIVE A PROVISION OF FEDERAL WATER (IRRIGATION) LAW PASSED DURING THIS PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION WHICH LIMITS AMOUNT OF INDIVIDUALLY HELD, NEWLY IRRIGATED ACREAGE TO TWENTY HECTARES. BUT AGRARIAN REFORM SECRETARY FELIX BARRA GARCIA SAID THAT "WE DO NOT NEED LEGISLATIVE CHANGES TO GIVE LAND AND WATER TO CAMPESINOS". THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH LIKEWISE SOUGHT MODERATE TONE BY DECLARING THAT "NEITHER LARGE LAND HOLDINGS NOR VIOLENCE" WAS THE MEXICAN WAY OF SOLVING PROBLEMS. THE PRESIDENT CALLED FOR NATIONAL
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UNITY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS HAPPENING, BECAUSE "NEITHER THE

ONE SIDE IS GOOD NOR THE OTHER BAD". TO FORESTALL FURTHER LAND INVASIONS THE PRESIDENT SAID HE WAS TRANSFERRING SECRETARIAT OF AGRARIAN REFORM TO CIUDAD OBREGON TO TAKE ON-THE-SCENE ACTION IN LAND TENANCY DISPUTES. HE WOULD RETURN IN THIRTY DAYS TO SIGN "RESOLUTIONS".

3. IN TYPICALLY OBLIQUE ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY PRESIDENT SAID LAND DISORDERS WERE OF "SUSPICIOUS ORIGIN" AND WERE DESIGNED "TO PRODUCE OFFICIAL FORMS OF REPRESSION." INVOKING THE NOW STANDARD LINE ON SUCH OCCASIONS, THE PRESIDENT RECALLED THAT MEXICO HAD LOST HALF ITS NATIONAL TERRITORY WHEN IT WAS INTERNALLY DIVIDED.

4. COMMENT: GOM HAS USED FORMULA OF MASS RALLY WITH XENOPHOBIC OVERTONES ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS WHEN IT FELT ITSELF UNDER ATTACK, AS AFTER JUNE 1971 STUDENT DISORDERS AND DURING HEIGHT OF NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1973 GOM-PRIVATE SECTOR ACRIMONY. THE FORM APPEARS TO BE REASSURING TO SUPPORTERS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY, THE SUBSTANCE TO THOSE LEERY OF GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS. ON THIS OCCASION GOM SOUGHT TO ASSURE LANDLESS PEASANTS OF ITS COMMITMENT TO CONTINUING LAND REFORM WHILE REASSURING INDIVIDUAL FARMERS THAT VIOLENT LAND INVASIONS WILL NOT BE COUNTENANCED AND THAT NO CHANGES IN THE RULES OF THE AGRARIAN GAME ARE CONTEMPLATED. WHETHER RALLY AND PROMISES OF PROMPT ACTION WILL HAVE DAMPENING EFFECT ON LAND INVASION PROBLEM REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
THOMPSON

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